

Charles A. Ellwood

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Charles Abram Ellwood (January 20, 1873 near [Ogdensburg, New York](#) – September 25, 1946) was one of the leading [American sociologists](#) of the [interwar](#) period, studying [intolerance](#), [communication](#) and [revolutions](#) and using many multidisciplinary methods. He argued that sociology should play a role in directing [cultural evolution](#) through [education](#) of [society](#).

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Biography [[edit source](#)]

He graduated from [Cornell University](#) in 1896 and studied also at the Universities of [Chicago](#) and [Berlin](#). For one year he was lecturer and instructor at the [University of Nebraska](#) and in 1900 became professor of sociology at the [University of Missouri](#). He became also advisory editor of the [American Journal of Sociology](#) and associate editor of the [Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology](#). In 1904 he served as president of the Missouri Confederate Charities.^[1] He was the fourteenth [president](#) of the [American Sociological Association](#) in 1924. He spent the first 30 years of his career and rose to national prominence at the University of Missouri-Columbia before a 15-year tenure at [Duke University](#).^[2]

An excerpt from the Missouri University (MU) Sociology Web site reads:











Charles Ellwood was from the era in which sociology was emerging as a distinct field of study distinguished from philosophy, political economy, religion, and other fields. Ellwood defended a scientific conception of sociology, but he also argued that sociology should address social problems and contribute directly to social reform. His moral and religious convictions fed directly into his sociology. Later, some advocates of a more scientific sociology would classify scholars like Ellwood as "do-gooders" who held sociology back from its scientific ambitions. Ellwood wrote an influential textbook on Social Problems which sold over 200,000 copies and established the model for social problems courses around the country. Thesis and dissertation topics at MU in Ellwood's period were largely focused on social problems including poverty and racial inequality in Columbia and other Missouri towns. One of his students, Terence Pihlblad, earned both his M.A. and Ph.D. at Missouri and subsequently joined the MU department as a professor, serving in that capacity, with minor interruptions, into the 1970s. Pihlblad's dissertation, completed in 1925 under Ellwood's direction, criticized the then-popular notion that intelligence tests might be used to determine which racial and ethnic groups were superior. Pihlblad argued that intelligence test scores reflect educational and social backgrounds rather than native intelligence. A tragic event in the 1920s (recounted by retired business executive, Bob Beasley, at the Centennial Symposium held by the Department of Sociology in September 2000) illustrates the kind of public controversy that has often affected MU sociology since the 1920s. In 1923 a young Black man was lynched in Columbia after being falsely accused of a sexual assault against a young white woman. He was hanged from a bridge over the main road running by the MU campus. In the aftermath of the event, according to Beasley's report, Charles Ellwood was a vocal, public critic of the lynching and of the local citizens for allowing such a thing to happen in Columbia. Ellwood became the target of Ku Klux Klan threats and much local indignation. In the same time period, Terry Pihlblad must have been writing his critique of the use of intelligence tests to determine racial and ethnic superiority. Also, Herbert Blumer, later to become a prominent sociologist at the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley, completed an M.A. degree at MU in 1925 and stayed for a few years as a teacher. He became a target of public criticism around 1927 for suggesting in a guest lecture at Stephens College that there are no pure races, a point which Ellwood and Pihlblad had both argued in their writings.^[3]

Publications [\[edit source \]](#)

- *Sociology and Modern Social Problems* (1910)
- *Sociology in its Psychological Aspects* (1912; French trans., 1914)
- *The Social Problem: A Constructive Analysis* (1917)

He also monographs and special articles on social psychology.^[1]

Notes [\[edit source \]](#)


- ¹ ^a ^b This article incorporates text from a publication now in the [public domain](#): Rines, George Edwin, ed. (1920). "Ellwood, Charles Abram"  . *Encyclopedia Americana*.
- ² ^a ["Archived copy"](#)   (PDF). Archived from [the original](#)   (PDF) on 2007-06-13. Retrieved 2007-07-27.
- ³ ^a ["The First 100 Years of Sociology at MU"](#)  . University of Missouri: Department of Sociology. Archived from [the original](#)   on 9 August 2013. Retrieved 7 May 2012.

References [[edit source](#)]

- [Biography at ASA](#) 

External links [[edit source](#)]

- [Works by Charles A. Ellwood](#) at [Project Gutenberg](#)
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